Ending Physical Punishment in Wales

Information for organisations and people who work with, volunteer or care for children, outside of formal education and childcare

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

21 March 2022 is a historic moment for children and their rights in Wales. From this day on, physically punishing children will be **illegal** in Wales. We want to protect children and their rights, to help give them the best start in life.

Do you work with, volunteer or care for children in unregulated settings (those not regulated/ inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales)?
For example at sports clubs, youth groups, activity clubs, unregistered out of school clubs, faith groups or baby-sitters. If so, here's what you need to know about the change in law.

What is physical punishment?

There are lots of types of physical punishment. It can mean smacking, hitting, slapping and shaking. But there are other types too.

It isn't possible to give a set list of what makes up physical punishment because it can be anything where a child is punished using physical force. Research suggests that any type of physical punishment could be harmful to children.

What does the change in law mean?

- All physical punishment will be illegal in Wales.
- It will give children the same protection from assault as adults.
- It will make the law clearer - easier for children, parents, professionals and the public to understand.

Will the change in law apply to everybody in Wales?

Yes, it will apply to everyone - parents or anyone who is responsible for a child while the parents are absent.

And as with other laws, it will apply to visitors to Wales too.

Physical punishment is already illegal in schools, children's homes, local authority foster care homes and childcare settings.

What happens if people physically punish a child from 21 March 2022?

Anyone who physically punishes a child:

- will be breaking the law
- risks being arrested or charged with assault
- may get a criminal record, which is the same for any criminal offence.

Information, advice and support is available for anyone who needs it, to help them find positive ways to manage children's behaviour and to help avoid such a situation ever happening.

Stopio Cosbi Corfforol

Ending Physical Punishment

What should I do if I see a child being physically punished or if I am concerned about a child?

- Contact your local social services department.
- You can also call the police in an emergency, or if a child is in immediate danger.

What happens next?

- Ahead of the law changing on 21 March 2022, the Welsh Government is working with partners, including in the third / voluntary sector, to ensure the change in law will be implemented in the best way possible.
- This work includes looking at processes, guidance and training which may need to be reviewed or put in place following the change in the law.
- In light of this, It is important that you continue to keep up to date with updates to guidance and training which apply to you. A practice guide under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures is being developed and will be published before the law changes.

Where can I find out more?

Information about ending physical punishment can be found at: gov.wales/EndPhysicalPunishment

Wales Safeguarding Procedures detail the essential roles and responsibilities for practitioners to ensure that they safeguard children who are at risk of abuse and neglect: safeguarding.wales

Wales Safeguarding procedures (Practice Guides); a practice guide related to physical punishment of children will be published on this page: safeguarding.wales/chi/index.c6.html

Parenting. Give it time offers positive parenting practical hints, tips and expert advice to encourage good behaviour from children and alternatives to physical punishment. Their parenting support page offers links to further support and helplines.

Universal parenting support and advice is provided by midwives, health visitors, GPs and Family Information Services. Early help programmes such as Flying Start (if you live in a Flying Start area) and Families First.

Times have changed. Attitudes have changed.
There is no place for physical punishment in a modern Wales.